



## Fact Sheet

### Promoting Healthy Weight in North Dakota Children

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**Fact: Food choices and inactive lifestyles contribute to a growing national and statewide problem: obesity.** Nearly six out of every 10 North Dakota adults are either overweight or obese, and the number of children who are overweight also is increasing. Almost 50 percent of North Dakota students in grades nine through 12 do not participate in even one physical education class during the school week, and 42 percent do not eat even one serving of a fruit or vegetable a day.



**Fact: Adequate physical activity is important for children who grow up in an increasingly sedentary society.** About 40 percent of children ages 5 through 8 have a cardiac risk factor such as high blood pressure, elevated blood cholesterol or obesity. Part of this is attributed to the fact that the average American child watches four hours of television daily. Research shows that the more television a child watches, the more likely he or she is to be overweight.

**Fact: Obesity is a major cause of type 2 diabetes.** In 1999, 20 percent of North Dakota's ninth through 12th graders were either at risk for becoming overweight or were overweight. The trend toward obesity is alarming, especially since obesity is a major cause of type 2 diabetes, a growing condition among children. In fact, the number of children with type 2 diabetes has surged from fewer than 4 percent of all childhood diabetes cases in 1990 to 20 percent in 1999.

**Fact: Medical causes of obesity are rare.** Children most often become overweight because of genetic factors, lack of adequate physical activity, unhealthy eating patterns, or a combination of these factors. Most overweight children younger than 3 who have parents of normal weight will grow into a healthy weight; however, if still overweight after age 4, the child likely will remain overweight, especially if his or her parents are overweight as well. The genetic predisposition for children to gain excess weight can be controlled through healthy eating and physical activity habits.

